United Nations A/C.5/70/SR.30

General Assembly
Seventieth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
12 April 2016

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 30th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 18 March 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Bhattarai ..... (Nepal)
Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Ruiz Massieu

Contents

Agenda item 134: Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (*continued*)

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (continued)

Thematic cluster I: special and personal envoys and special advisers of the Secretary-General (continued)

Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 134: Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (*continued*)

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (continued)

Thematic cluster I: special and personal envoys and special advisers of the Secretary-General (continued)

Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General (continued) (A/70/7/Add.47, A/70/348/Add.8 and A/70/348/Add.8/Corr.1)

1. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed resources under thematic cluster I for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General appointed to support an inclusive dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflict in Burundi (A/70/348/Add.8 and A/70/348/Add.8/Corr.1), said that the Special Adviser would work with the Government of Burundi and other concerned stakeholders, as well as with subregional, regional and international partners. The estimated resources for the Office, which included 49 positions, amounted to $9.4 million, to be charged against the balance of the provision for special political missions appropriated under section 3, Political affairs, of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

2. Pending approval of the budget proposal by the General Assembly, the initial requirements were being met through a commitment authority of the Secretary-General in the amount of $1.6 million under the provisions of General Assembly resolution 70/250, on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 2016-2017.

3. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/70/7/Add.47), said that the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the resources requested by the Secretary-General. However, since the Office's activities were at an early stage, some adjustments should be made to the proposed staffing levels, both in Bujumbura and at United Nations Headquarters. Furthermore, considering the small size of the mission, some reductions should be made in the support component.

4. **Mr. Kisoka** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group was committed to addressing the political challenges in Burundi and elsewhere in Africa in an efficient and effective manner. The Group had taken note of the Secretary-General's proposals and fully supported the deployment of an additional United Nations team on the ground in Burundi to complement the efforts of regional and subregional actors to address the political and security challenges in the country. Nonetheless, the Group had concerns regarding some aspects of the Secretary-General's proposals that lacked clarity and justification.

5. By its resolution 70/8, the General Assembly had endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination in its report on its fifty-fifth session (A/70/16), which included the recommendation that the General Assembly should emphasize the need for the organizations of the United Nations system and intergovernmental bodies to continue to fully take into account the views, comments and/or input of the African Union and other regional and subregional mechanisms in their policy formulation and decision-making, mainly in the areas of mediation, conflict prevention and peace and security. In that regard, the Group wished to remind the Secretary-General of the importance of respecting the terms of General Assembly resolution 70/8 when developing and submitting his proposals. The Group would also be interested to learn how the provisions of the resolution had been taken into account in the current proposals.

6. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union had noted with satisfaction the readiness of the members of the African Union high-level delegation to continue supporting the mediation efforts led by President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda on behalf of the East African Community, particularly with regard to the need to ensure that all stakeholders in Burundi participated in the inclusive dialogue and actively preserved the gains of the Arusha Agreement.

7. The Peace and Security Council had also welcomed the recent visit by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to Burundi, as part of international

support for African-led efforts to find a lasting solution to the crisis in Burundi.

8. The Secretary-General's proposals provided no information on division of labour and the roles of the multiple representatives of the Secretary-General whose mandates included the situation in Burundi, for example, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the United Nations Office to the African Union, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations country team, all of which were led by an official at the level of Under-Secretary-General. Furthermore, the proposals should have presented information not only on United Nations structures but also on all the regional and subregional actors involved in the activities described, including the East African Community, the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. In addition, since the title of the Secretary-General's envoy was the Special Adviser on Conflict Prevention, including in Burundi, the mandate went beyond the situation in Burundi. The Group looked forward to receiving clarification in that regard.

9. The East African Community Summit had appointed President Museveni as the Community's mediator for the inter-Burundian dialogue. In addition, the Community's seventeenth Ordinary Summit had appointed Benjamin Mkapa, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, to facilitate the mediation under President Museveni's leadership. The Group would be interested to learn how the proposed special political mission would complement the work of the regional and subregional actors. The Group would also seek clarification of the linkages to the Community's work and the support to be provided for it. The proposed staffing structure should have taken into account the existing structure in the United Nations system and at the regional and subregional levels.

10. With regard to international support for Burundi, the Group was disappointed that certain stakeholders had cancelled or suspended their involvement in the country's development programme. The Group expected that the full commitment of partners would be reinstated unconditionally so as to facilitate the development aspirations of the Burundian people.

11. The success of United Nations operations in Burundi and elsewhere largely depended on the credibility, impartiality and professionalism of their staff. The Group requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the team to be deployed in Burundi strictly observed those basic principles.

12. The Group would examine the proposals carefully and in good faith with the aim only of ensuring the approval of an effective and professional team of experts that would work with the Government of Burundi and regional actors and that would not seek to prolong its mandate. The Group trusted that the Secretariat would provide adequate and timely responses to its requests for clarification.

13. **Mr. de Preter** (Observer for the European Union), noting that three weeks had passed since the start of the first part of the resumed session, said that it was regrettable that important issues such as the proposals relating to the special political mission for Burundi were only now being introduced, while others had not yet been introduced at all. Some of those issues, such as the revised estimates for the resident coordinator system, were of crucial importance for the delivery of mandates in the field, particularly in relation to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Other issues, such as amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules, were time-bound. He asked the Secretariat to explain the exact reasons for the delays and asked the Chair of the Advisory Committee to elaborate on the measures the Advisory Committee was taking to expedite its work so that the Fifth Committee, in turn, could complete its programme of work.

14. Time and again, the States members of the European Union had recalled the importance of timely submission of all required documentation in all official languages, which was key to facilitating the quality and speed of the Committee's discussions on an equal basis among Member States.

15. The current delays reflected badly on the Committee. On 23 December 2015, in its resolution 70/247, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to transmit reports to the Advisory Committee no later than two weeks in advance of its scheduled consideration of items so as to ensure that the Advisory Committee would, in turn, provide its advice to the General Assembly no later than two weeks in advance of formal introduction of an item,

with an exception for revised estimates and programme budget implications arising in the course of the main part of the session of the Assembly. Barely three months later, it had to be acknowledged that the Committee was not abiding by a resolution that it had itself submitted.

16. Committee members had also been led to believe that there was an informal understanding that items could not and should not be introduced during the last week of a session. That point had now been reached for the first part of the resumed session. The European Union member States therefore sought the Chair's guidance on what to do next, bearing in mind that they were not in a position to agree to extend the session under any circumstances and that they wished to abide by resolutions that had originated in the Committee.

17. **The Chair** said that unedited advance versions of the reports on amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules and on the resident coordinator system had been made available to the Bureau and were being shared with all constituencies.

18. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee was always mindful of the Fifth Committee's programme of work and of the schedule for the issuance of reports set out in General Assembly resolution 70/247. He had always been candid about the fact that the Advisory Committee required four to five weeks on average to issue a report. It had adhered to that turnaround time for all its reports for the first part of the resumed session; indeed, it had produced three reports within three weeks and was about to issue another that had been produced within one week. The Advisory Committee had achieved those results by working additional hours and by taking advance questions from Fifth Committee members. Since the Advisory Committee had been focusing its efforts on completing the reports for the first part of the resumed session, it was now behind schedule with its reports regarding peacekeeping missions for the second part of the resumed session. Nonetheless, it was making every effort to issue them on time. He stood ready to discuss other measures that could be taken to ensure that reports were produced earlier. The only report currently being worked on was the report on revised estimates relating to the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, which should be ready within the next few days.

19. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller) said that the Secretariat also took the timing and quality of documents very seriously. It worked closely with the Advisory Committee and made every effort to respond to the latter's questions in a timely manner.

20. Noting that the mandates for the particular documents mentioned by the representative of the European Union had been adopted on 23 December 2015, she said that the report on the resident coordinator system had been issued at the end of January, while the proposal relating to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which had entailed a comprehensive process of consultation both within and outside the Organization, would be issued shortly. The budget proposal relating to the special political mission for Burundi had been issued on 10 February. Political developments did not necessarily synchronize with intergovernmental processes, but the Secretariat was aware that the Committee needed the relevant documents in order to carry out its work in an efficient manner. It was committed to transparency regarding the schedule for the mandating, production, review and finalization of reports, and to working with the Advisory Committee and the secretariat of the Fifth Committee to ensure that the process ran smoothly.

21. **Mr. Sánchez Azcuy** (Cuba) said that his delegation shared many of the frustrations expressed by the representative of the European Union. Indeed, many reports in addition to the ones he had mentioned were still outstanding; in some cases, the relevant mandates had been adopted six months previously and there was even one report for which the mandate had been adopted as far back as July 2015.

22. In the production of reports, the main responsibility lay not with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management nor with the Controller but with author departments, which should supply their input for reports in a timely fashion so as to avoid delays further down the line. During the current part of the resumed session, the Committee had been adding reports to its programme of work as they became available because of submission delays. Furthermore, all the reports for the second part of the resumed session should have been ready by February at the latest, because that was when the Advisory Committee needed to be reviewing them. It was

therefore also unfair for the Committee to direct its frustration at the Advisory Committee.

23. **Mr. Kisoka** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation shared the frustration expressed by previous speakers about the delays in the issuance of documentation and did not fully accept the explanations provided by the Controller and the Chair of the Advisory Committee. A number of important proposals were well overdue, including the proposal relating to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, on which other actors had begun work soon after the adoption of the relevant mandate. It was difficult to understand the reasons for the delays. Furthermore, despite the Secretary-General's commitment to greater transparency and accountability — an example of which was the decision to make public the audit reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services — a memorandum sent to stakeholders on the 2030 Agenda had not been provided to Member States on the grounds that it was an internal document.

24. His delegation also failed to understand the rationale for the setting of priorities by the Secretary-General. For example, the documentation relating to the implementation of a flexible workplace at United Nations Headquarters, requiring resources of around $65 million, had been produced in a timely fashion, whereas the report on revised estimates relating to the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (A/70/745), which amounted to around $12 million and were crucial to mediation efforts that would directly affect the lives of people on the ground, had been issued late, while the related report of the Advisory Committee was still outstanding.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.